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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: All-Party Mud Wrestling as Campaign
Concludes

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Accordingly.

¶1. (SBU) Summary: As Moldova's July 29 repeat parliamentary election nears, the political parties have been using this campaign period to try to exploit the controversies which followed April 5 elections and the violent demonstrations of April 7. The ruling Communists have extensively used campaign themes blaming the opposition for the April riot, while most opposition parties promoted their own conspiracy theories and engaged in ad hominem attacks. Serious platforms and descriptions of policy are largely absent from this hurried campaign. The nastiness on all sides shows the depth of polarization, which will likely linger regardless of the outcome at the polls. End summary.

PCRM: Opposition Guilty of an "Attack on Moldova"

¶2. (SBU) The centerpiece of the campaign by Acting President Voronin's Party of Communists (PCRM) has been a slick 11-minute video alleging that the April 7 violence was organized by the opposition in a deliberate effort to destabilize the country. The video, "Attack on Moldova," which cross-cuts deceptively between scenes of violence and opposition rallies also claims that the opposition leaders were in league with forces in Romania to harm Moldova's sovereignty. The PCRM is also trying to promote its image as the guarantor of stability for the future, as seen by its trademark photo of a young woman with a baby, used in almost all its campaign literature and posters. But the party's dominant tone has shifted from promises to fear-mongering and the slogan "Let's defend our motherland!" has become the core of the PCRM's campaign. In line with Voronin's earlier accusations that the opposition was plotting a coup and preparing Moldova's reunion with Romania at the expense of the country's independence, the PCRM has persistently promoted the image of opposition parties as "traitors" who seek to "destroy" and "liquidate" the country.

Opposition bites back

¶3. (SBU) Our Moldova Alliance (AMN), the Liberal

Party (PL) and the Liberal Democratic Party (PLDM) launched a common platform and some joint actions. (Note: these three parties were the only opposition forces to enter Parliament in the April 5 elections; all three appear poised to repeat their success on July 29, although some polls show AMN possibly polling beneath the 5 percent threshold. End note.) Youth branches of all three parties released "appeals to grandparents," calling on them not to vote for the PCRM, and thus ensure a better future for their grandchildren. But there have also been certain differences in their campaigns. AMN has focused on anti-communism, playing off the PCRM's slogan with the counter-slogan "Let's defend our motherland against the communists!" The PL projects fuzzy roseate images in a video of Chisinau Mayor Dorin Chirtoaca telling a little girl who asks "What will happen when I grow up?" that "You will have a family, a job and live in a free country here in Moldova." Similar material has come from PLDM leader Filat, who told an interviewer that "in the last 8 years not only the rule of law and the economy were ruined but also people's spirituality. So, we need new visions, managerial capacity and coherence in protecting and promoting our identity."

14. (SBU) All three of these opposition parties have emphasized claims of electoral fraud in April and widespread human rights abuses by government forces after April 7, including, as PLDM asserts, the death of four men allegedly tortured in custody. Opposition parties also used videos posted on their websites and screened during meetings with voters around the country. One such film aired by PLDM blamed the Communists for

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organizing the April violence. The opposition parties have made claims to media that police or PCRM activists prevented or disrupted the screenings. The PL, which has as a slogan "Communists destroy," also set up a prominent display of caricatures in Chisinau's main park picturing Voronin and his political allies as (simultaneously) Nazis, Stalinists and homosexuals. PCRM material has returned the compliment by portraying Chirtoaca sporting a Hitler moustache, and repeatedly dwelling on the theme accusing the opposition of being fascists.

Lupu's Democratic Party Q Above the Fray?

15. (SBU) Former Speaker Marian Lupu, who left the PCRM in June, is the only major candidate who has largely refrained from scurrilous attacks. The Democratic Party (PD) (which invited Lupu to execute a friendly takeover in June) has campaigned in a more moderate, centrist way, trying to appear as a reconciliation party and projecting itself as a "solution for a nationwide consensus between two belligerent and extreme wings." "Let's stop the political war" is one of PD's most widespread messages. Numerous billboards feature this slogan, showing Marian Lupu as a future President who will bring peace and equilibrium to society. The PCRM has been quite reticent in criticizing the PD, while the opposition parties have been constantly projecting their perception of Lupu as "PCRM's project." (Note: In contrast to its under-the-threshold performance in April, the PD, under Lupu's new banner, is predicted to make it into Parliament on July 29. End note.)

Comment:

16. (SBU) Almost all sides are exploiting the lack of even basic consensus about who is to blame for the startling and disturbing events of April 7. Their willingness to make disturbing accusations of treason and murder have further poisoned the atmosphere and will likely make post-election consensus building difficult. Only Lupu's centrist message seeks to ameliorate the deep polarization in society. In addition, polls that predict a huge turnout and high numbers of undecided voters portray an eager electorate whose main interests expressed to pollsters—the economy, the economy, and the economy—are not being met. Many people are tired of the political confrontation and are hoping the repeat elections will allow leadership questions to be settled.

Chaudhry